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Written statement* submitted by Nazra for Feminist Studies, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Arbitrary Detention for WHRDs and Civil Society Continues to be Targeted in Egypt

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) and feminists in Egypt continue to be targeted for their activism and defense of various rights. Some of them face *Travel Bans, Asset Freeze Orders* and *Arrest Warrants* on the background of case no.173 for 2011 known as the NGO Foreign Funding Case.

A progressive escalation against HRDs and civil society organizations is marked by summons during 2018 by the investigative judge in case no. 173 for 2011 of various staff members and partners in civil society organizations, all released on bail ranging from 5000 to 30000 EGP. On 20 June 2018, feminist activist and Woman Human Rights Defender (WHRD) Mozn Hassan, Founder and Executive Director of Nazra for Feminist Studies, appeared in front of the investigative judge and was released on bail amounting to 30,000 EGP, on charges of: establishing an entity in violation of the law and conducting activities that do not abide by the purposes of the organization with the intention of harming national security, receiving foreign funding with the intention of harming national security, and tax evasion. Recent summons also included Dr. Magda Adly and Dr. Suzan Fayad, co-founders of El-Nadeem Center, both released on bails amounting to 20,000 EGP on 10 June and 19 July 2018 respectively.

It is worth mentioning that on the 5th of April 2018, the Egyptian court of cassation annulled sentences against 16 defendants working in foreign NGOs before 2013 who were originally sentenced to 1-5 years in prison in absentia in the same case, and ordered a retrial in front of a criminal court. Despite this positive verdict regarding international NGOs in the case, harassment of local NGOs along with their directors and staff members is ongoing.

On the 26th of August 2017, Mozn Hassan along with other HRDs and WHRDs in the case submitted an appeal to the administrative court to cancel the renewal of the investigative judge's mandate in Case 173, as his mandate was renewed consecutively for almost three years now, in violation of article 66 of the criminal procedures code, which clearly stipulates that investigative judges' mandate should not exceed 6 months, subject to renewal once, which means that the investigative judge has been working on the case for more than two years - and continues to do so- without a legal or judicial mandate.

Moreover, there have been several arrests between 11-13 May 2018, starting with the arrest of activist Amal Fathy on the 11th of May 2018 when security forces raided her home and arrested her along with her three year-old son and husband, both of whom were released on the same day. The Maadi prosecution detained Ms. Fathy on remand in Case 7991 for the year 2018 on charges of: 1) broadcasting a video on social media (facebook) to incite the overthrow of the Egyptian government, 2) publishing a video on social media (facebook) to spread false rumors, 3) the misuse of social media. This is a reaction to a video Ms. Fathy posted on the 9th of May where she criticizes state's failure in protecting women from sexual harassment. The Maadi prosecution released Ms. Fathy on bail amounting to 10,000 EGP on 19 June 2018 and the case was referred to court on 8 August 2018, where the next hearing is on 8 September 2018. However, Ms. Fathy remains in pre-trial detention at Al-Qanater Women's Prison as she is still under interrogation by the State Security Prosecution in case 621 for the year 2018, where she was accused of: joining a terrorist group, and using the internet and social media with the intention of promoting ideas and beliefs calling for the commitment of terrorist acts through spreading false news and rumors aiming to disrupt public security and harm general interest.

Furthermore, on 12 May 2018, a number of citizens were arrested in Metro stations while protesting against a significant rise in ticket prices. The detainees included a number of women protesters, some of whom were released while 6 other women were interrogated in case 718 for the year 2018 by the State Security Prosecution and accused of 1) participating in a terrorist group while knowing its intentions, 2) participating in and inciting protest to disrupt public transportation and harm citizens' interests 3) using the internet and social media to incite terrorist acts. The State Security Prosecution ordered the release of three of them in July with precautionary measures as they remain under surveillance, while the three remaining women protestors are still detained on remand.

In the past, tactics to punish Egyptian WHRDs and HRDs in case 173 included asset freeze orders as well as travel bans against several directors and staff members of various human rights organizations. On 14 December 2016, an asset freeze was issued against Azza Soliman and her law firm "Lawyers for Justice and Peace". Then on 11 January 2017 an order was issued to freeze the personal assets of Mozn Hassan, those of the company "Nazra for Studies" as well as those of the association "Nazra for Feminist Studies". The asset freeze order issued against "Nazra for Feminist Studies" is an unprecedented one in the case, as it is the first time the assets of a registered NGO under law 84 for the year 2002 are frozen. Travel bans are also used as a punishment for WHRDs and HRDs, and have included WHRD and feminist Mozn Hassan, Founder and Executive Director of Nazra for Feminist Studies, who was banned from traveling

on the morning of 27 June 2016, as well as WHRD and activist Esraa Abdel Fattah, Mohamed Zaree, the Egypt Office Director of CIHRS, Hoda Abdel Wahab, the Executive Director of the Arab Center for Independence of the Judiciary and Legal Profession, Dr. Aida Seif Al-Dawla and Dr. Suzanne Fayyad, founders of Al-Nadeem Centre for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, Azza Soliman, and others.

The retrial of the Ministerial Cabinet Case was concluded. The case includes 1 WHRD who is still detained since March 3, 2015, namely Shaimaa Ahmed Saad who received a sentence of 5 years imprisonment. However, a lifetime imprisonment was confirmed for 43, and a verdict of 10 years imprisonment was issued for 9 juvenile detainees on 25 July 2017. It is important to state that 125 others were not included in the retrial, and they include 7 women. One of these women started a retrial procedure and is awaiting a verdict.

Sexual violence against women in the public space continues to remain a grave problem. While 2017 was declared "the year of women" by the state, little has been achieved on that front despite demands and promises to adopt a unified law to combat violence against women and to amend personal status law. The most notable achievement of 2017 has been the adoption of the "National Strategy for Women's Empowerment 2030". Also, a national strategy to combat violence against women has been announced and published on May 7, 2015, yet, after more than three years of its publishing, we emphasize the importance of monitoring its implementation. Despite the importance of the presence of policies and legislation issued by the state that feminist groups have always called for, continuous crimes show shortcomings in policies and their implementation, making it important to monitor what is effective and what needs to be applied, in order to enable combat of sexual violence in a more effective manner. There is also a dire necessity to design and implement policies that combat violence against women in Egyptian syndicates, as Lawyer Hoda Abdel-Wahab was assaulted on 29 March 2017 in the syndicate by another member of the same syndicate when she was renewing her membership card, in order to ensure accountability for perpetrators and create a safe environment for women lawyers. The same applies to teachers who continue to suffer from sexual violence amid the lack of provision of safety measures for them, whether in places where they teach, or in transportation routes, as well as journalists' who suffer from various violations.

Subsequently, Nazra for Feminist Studies urges the United Nations to monitor states' implementation of the WHRD resolution adopted in 2013, as well as Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations with regards to women's human rights in Egypt, to ensure protection of women and WHRDs. We also urge the United Nations to call on Egyptian authorities to close case 173, and the persecution of HRDs and WHRDs, as without their empowerment, human rights would be jeopardized and violations would not be exposed.